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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Extension Service-Soil Conservation Service Cooperating

REPORT OF THE EXTENSION SOIL CONSERVATIONISTS CONFERENCE

NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS STATES -- MARCH 16-18, 1948

Lincoln, Nebraska

Extension Soil Conservationists attending the conference were:

Irvine T. Dietrich, North Dakota  
M. P. Hansmeier, Montana  
Leonard L. Ladd, South Dakota  
Reuben C. Lind, Kansas  
Owen J. McDougal, Nebraska

Others attending the conference were:

John A. Bartruff, Assistant State Conservationist, SCS, Laramie, Wyoming  
L. E. Clapp, Extension Soil Conservationist, Ames, Iowa  
Arthur W. Emerson, Chief, Regional Division of Information and Education,  
SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
H. E. Engstrom, Assistant Regional Conservator, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
Adrian C. Fox, Head, Regional Educational Relations Section, SCS,  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
Bernie Camp, Assistant Extension Editor, Nebraska  
H. G. Gould, Assistant Director of Extension Administration, Lincoln, Nebraska  
O. W. Greene, Chief, Regional Personnel Management Division, SCS,  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
B. H. Hopkins, Chief, Regional Project Plans Division, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
E. G. Jones, State Conservationist, SCS, Nebraska  
Steven J. Kortan, Zone Conservationist, SCS  
A. E. Marquardt, Assistant State Conservationist, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
Dr. Roy Matelski, Agronomy Department, University of Nebraska  
A. E. McClymonds, Regional Conservator, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
B. C. McLean, In Charge, Visual Information Unit, Information Division,  
SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
O. E. McConnell, Assistant Regional Conservator, In Charge of Operations,  
SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
M. S. McMurtrey, Regional Biologist, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
Kirk M. Sandals, Chief, Water Conservation Division, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
J. F. Schinagl, Extension Editor, Laramie, Wyoming  
Harold J. Swan, Head, Regional Current Information Section, Information  
Division, SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
W. R. Tascher, Extension-SCS Conservationist, Urbana, Illinois  
Charles W. Townsend, Soil Conservationist, Regional Project Plans Division,  
SCS, Lincoln, Nebraska  
Dr. M. D. Weldon, Associate Professor of Agronomy, In Charge of Soils  
Research, Lincoln, Nebraska

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### Flood Control Activities of the U.S.D.A. in the Missouri River Basin

A chart summarizing a survey of 11 flood control areas now authorized in the United States was used to show that 75 percent of flood damage occurs on farms and ranches on any particular watershed. The remaining 25 percent is damage from siltation, various urban losses, stream channels, and flood plains. Congressional authority provides for work on flood control in the Department of Agriculture and the Corps of Army Engineers. Within the Department of Agriculture the Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service are concerned. The outlook for survey completion in the Missouri River Basin is approximately two years. Reference was made to the operational activities on the Little Sioux Watershed which is illustrative of such work on other tributaries in the Missouri River Basin. This discussion provided guidance for Extension Service activities with respect to surveys to be taken and the educational activities and organization needed to carry out flood control activities. Emphasis was given the need for work of this kind prior to actual field construction activities.

### Evidences of How Education Affects Establishment of Soil Conservation

State and regional studies of progress in soil conservation districts concerning such items as the number of applications received from farmers, farm conservation plans, establishment of conservation and maintenance showed that to a great extent the progress is a matter of education supplemented by on-site technical assistance. The high degree of correlation which has been observed emphasizes the need for intensified educational work to obtain the needed results quickly. This is particularly true in the case of projected flood control activities.

### Recording and Reporting Soil Conservation Accomplishments

A plan for recording soil conservation district activities which is being developed by the Nebraska State Soil Conservation Committee was discussed. The discussion brought out ways in which Extension Soil Conservationists and others could assist with the development of full and accurate reports of soil conservation district work. These records will show the assistance of agencies, organizations, and others to the districts. The records and reports of the Extension Service and Soil Conservation Service were differentiated from those of the soil conservation districts. District records may be used, it was felt, as the basis for fuller reporting of district work to the people of the district. Certain legal advantages were suggested as resulting from fuller district records. Several suggestions for improvement of the tentative Nebraska plan were made and copies were made available to the extension soil conservationists.

### Retirement Legislation for Eligible Employees and SCS Personnel Requirements

Recent retirement legislation was reviewed and questions answered. A summary of the major features of the new retirement plan for those eligible will be available in a forthcoming publication from the Civil Service Commission. It was recommended that since new features of the retirement plan affect survivors, that instructions pertaining to these features be included with other important papers for safe keeping after they have been given



consideration with the employee's family. A major change of interest to the extension soil conservationists is an increase of the deduction from salary for retirement of from 5 to 6 percent.

The need was stressed for college graduates as employees of the Soil Conservation Service who have received technical training in soil conservation and basic sciences with which conservation has been integrated so that assistance rendered districts technically will meet the necessary standards which are required in the successful establishment of conservation. It is believed that only with such a background of formal education will in-service training of the Soil Conservation Service provide a competent technical staff. This viewpoint is important in the development of college curricula leading to the training of students for soil and water conservation work.

#### Soil and Water Conservation Curriculum in the Nebraska College of Agriculture

The Agronomy Department of the University of Nebraska has developed over a period of years a conservation curriculum in which a student may major in subjects selected to develop an educational foundation in which professional technical training in the field of soil conservation may be developed. Two members of the faculty of the Agronomy Department presented in detail the development of the curriculum and its place in the educational program of the University of Nebraska. An arrangement has been made with the State Soil Conservation Service office for the summer-time employment of students majoring in soil conservation in soil conservation districts where they can receive field experience in actual application of practices and get college credit for this work. At the present time in the Northern Great Plains States the Agricultural Colleges offering majors in conservation are Kansas State College and the University of Nebraska. In the review of the conservation curricula of nearby state colleges and others throughout the United States, it was pointed out that there is a great need for the development of new courses and revisions of old courses so that the training received points specifically to the development of an educational background in soil conservation for professional technicians in soil conservation, vocational agricultural teachers, public school teachers, and for those who return to practice agriculture.

#### Group Conservation -- How Extension Soil Conservationists and Others Can Take Part

Based on a survey made by the Soil Conservation Service it was shown that the number of farmers and business men who understood soil and water conservation increased with the development of soil conservation district activities and progress with the establishment of soil conservation practices. Much of this change in understanding of the soil conservation program by both farmers and business men is due largely to what is already thought of as education brought about through such media as newspapers, radio, meetings of farmers and civic groups, 4-H Club activities, public school teaching, etc. An illustration was used which showed that many of the activities of a farm planner in obtaining a farmer application for technical assistance in planning for the establishment and maintenance of conservation practices involves an educational approach. Analysis of reports from soil conservation districts shows a high correlation between applications for assistance

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and the number of plans completed and conservation established on the land. An illustration was used concerning jobs which must be done in establishment of conservation such as grassed waterways, terracing and contouring, proper land use rotations and gully control, all of which require considerable emphasis on information needed in establishment. The group felt that an appraisal of educational needs for the doing of the different jobs of conservation involved about 70 percent education and 30 percent other activities.

#### Extension Work in the Little Sioux Watershed in Iowa

The extension soil conservationist from Iowa explained how the soil conservation educational work was being done in the Little Sioux Watershed. A county extension director is employed in one of the counties where a construction program is under way. It is anticipated that additional such assistants in soil conservation will be employed in 4 to 6 of the counties of the 10 in the watershed. Major educational problems of the watershed as reported were understanding of the need for soil conservation and appreciation of the costs of construction, sub-watershed organization and the establishment of conservation practices required on the farms of the sub-watersheds prior to construction work. A watershed committee consisting of one representative from each soil conservation district or counties where no districts have been organized provides the watershed area leadership in such matters as priority of work on sub-watersheds and standards for participation and completion of farm plans as related to construction work. An example of a county extension plan of work for soil conservation was exhibited. It was made clear in this discussion that because of the requirement for performance on upland conservation establishment and the proposed completion of the construction program in a 15-year period that there is the immediate need for an intensified program of education and facilitating activities over that now in existence.

#### The Place of the Extension Editor in Relating the Press and Radio Programs of Soil Conservation Districts to the Extension Service Press and Radio Programs

Mr. Schinagl, Extension Editor in Wyoming, suggested that extension soil conservationists discuss the flood control programs of their respective states with the extension editors emphasizing the watershed features and explain the importance of this program. He advised the planning of an information program in counties and soil conservation districts of such nature that people will be interested enough to ask the county extension workers for a program of education adapted to local conditions. More appeal to urban groups to make them conscious of their relationship to the soil and obtain more participation of civic organizations was suggested. Concerning materials he feels that publications have "a long way to go" in soil and water conservation and that there would be much merit in encouraging extension workers to take more good soil and water conservation pictures. County agents' photograph contests may be helpful. He raised the question of using adapted state or regional materials for arrangement in the interest of having more effective and economical literature. He advised knowing the editors and radio program directors. For the record of



work accomplished locally which is an important source of information and publicity, he felt joint preparation by the county agents and Soil Conservation Service personnel assisting soil conservation districts was desirable.

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Each state extension soil conservationist described briefly new soil conservation materials in use in his respective state and made copies available. Other materials available in the regional office of the Soil Conservation Service were described and distributed. Five new soil conservation motion pictures were shown and studied for use. An up-to-date list of new movies and slidefilms was provided. An arrangement was agreed upon for distribution to the extension soil conservationists of new materials by each sending to the Information Division at Lincoln 15 copies of each when new items are available. Insofar as possible, steps will be taken in each state to develop a supply of suitable audio-visual aids on soil conservation and the mechanics for their distribution. One way suggested to help bring this about was consideration of the matter by a sub-committee of the State Soil Conservation Advisory Committees as a basis for recommendations.

An examination of new literature on soil and water conservation showed an extensive array. Some of these were: Literature for young people, 4-H Club boys and girls, teaching units in various subjects of importance to soil conservation, publications for in-service training for teachers, flood control, soil conservation technical guides, guides for recording district activities, guides for developing farmer conservationists, reports of experimental work at state stations, exhibit guides, materials for use in churches, literature for use in schools, soil conservation activities with schools, teacher training programs, programs of federations of women's clubs, ideas for conservation displays, suggestions for civic club activities, guides for soil conservation district governing bodies, and guide sheets for soil conservation practices.

A plan for assisting soil conservation district governing bodies to develop educational programs and annual work plans is being followed in each of the states or will be undertaken for 1949 plans. Where plans have been carried out good results were reported. Important considerations for success appear to be (1) informing all to be concerned of the procedure to be followed, (2) assistance by the extension soil conservationist with the actual planning in each soil conservation district where this is feasible -- where it is not, the demonstration in representative areas so others can assist effectively with the planning, (3) preparation of clear and concise guides for local use in planning the educational work in soil conservation districts, (4) arrangements for carrying out the planning early enough in the year to permit the fullest development of plans by those able to assist districts, (5) arrangements for full collaboration of the agencies by State Soil Conservation Advisory Committees, and (6) arrangements for administrative followup by agencies.



Experiences reviewed showed that planning for soil conservation education in this way resulted in the fuller use of the resources and provided the basis for calendarizing the activities to be undertaken. It was stated that more attention should be given calendars or schedules because this would mark out the jobs and activities for a shorter period, fix responsibilities and provide a basis for periodic review of accomplishments. Also, reports indicated that county extension annual plans of work for soil conservation were improved greatly.

It was brought out that attention to soil conservation education with soil conservation district governing bodies should not be limited to the time when plans are made for the succeeding year — that attention to apprising governing bodies of resources throughout the year will be helpful.

Among the most beneficial soil conservation activities seem to be the various recognition award programs which have reached an all time high in numbers. It was pointed out that extension soil conservationists and others should study each such effort as to its effectiveness. Things to watch for according to comments are (1) extent of participation, and (2) the objectives of activities.

Extension work with youth in soil conservation was discussed with the following comments: (1) 4-H Club soil conservation experience should lead from the simple to the more complex, (2) the soil conservation 4-H Club program sponsored by the National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work should be looked to as the culminating club experience reflecting understanding of problems, information on ways to meet the problems, development of skills and the establishment on a given unit of land of the applicable soil and water conservation, (3) emphasize in the state 4-H Club soil conservation programs work with the younger boys and girls — possibly 10-14 years, (4) emphasize development of leadership especially for the work with the younger boys and girls, (5) encouragement of soil conservation district interest in soil conservation 4-H Club work, and (6) consideration by state extension service committees of how we can expand soil conservation work with youth.

The development of soil conservation education in the public schools was discussed. Many soil conservation districts are recognizing the importance of the public schools as a local educational resource in advancing their district programs. Likewise, many school people recognize their opportunities educationally in this field. Extension soil conservationists are helping school people see their opportunities in this work and are aiding with the development of teacher training, course of study development and teaching methods. Much progress was reported in the teaching of soil and water conservation at all levels of the educational system.

Considerable attention was given the discussion of information which people need to understand why action should be undertaken to protect land resources. In practice this may involve the regrouping of information to "get out the basic facts." The point was made that emphasis has been placed on the technical features of soil and water conservation practices without a comparable development of the information as to why the practices should be



used. Steps are being taken in some states to analyze what things can be emphasized further, what principles of soil and water conservation need clarification, the personnel of agencies who may participate and materials and procedures useful in bringing about the emphasis on information which will provide an improved basis for reasoning. This attention is being reflected in improved publicity materials on soil and water conservation.

The conference discussions this year, more than ever before, indicated that extension specialists were directing their efforts towards the fuller use of their information and that supervisory personnel of the Extension Service were guiding county extension workers toward a balanced program of extension work in soil and water conservation.

Extension soil conservationists recognize the enlarged opportunities they have of helping to bring specialized information to farmers and ranchers in such a way that there will be sound action programs farm unit by unit. In achieving conservation on farm units the conservationists recognize the value of group action for accelerated progress and for meeting the physical situations in watershed programs such as are involved in projected flood programs. Likewise, they recognize the opportunities of working with the personnel of the Soil Conservation Service for the most effective planning, establishment and maintenance work in soil conservation. Also, with enlarged programs of education and action there are opportunities to bring into fuller play the other resources available to districts, especially those which are available locally. It was clearly evident from the discussions that soil conservation district governing bodies are appreciative of the assistance which they have had. Extension conservationists plan to do what they can further to help soil conservation districts see and develop the local soil conservation program.

The extension soil conservationists attended a dinner meeting of the Lincoln Chapter of the Soil Conservation Society of America and heard a most interesting talk on atomic energy. They also attended a dinner meeting sponsored by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and saw the motion picture film "My Country" which had been produced recently by Goodyear.

The meeting with Mr. McClymonds at the conclusion of the conference was much appreciated. During each conference this has been the occasion for discussion of the conference sessions, comments which those attending wish to make about their work, the asking of questions and the making of plans for a future conference of this nature. There was unanimous agreement that the conferences be continued at appropriate times and places.



